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# Pagoda for Urns

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Rather than suffer that terrible affection  
That murderous excess of care

The ornithologist Schüz once overheard a young penguin crying out in  
despair:  
Why wasn't I born a stork?  
Mother would eat me by mistake  
And I could have some peace

*Translated by the author with John Batki*

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CHENG CH'OU-YÜ ( CHENG WEN-T'AO ) /  
TAIWAN

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## Clear and Bright: In the Grave

I am still drunk, and the quiet night flows within me  
As I stop up the ears, myth echoes around in my body  
A smell of blossoms percolates through the skin  
At this moment of ultimate beauty, I accept their worship  
Receiving the sacrifice of a thousand streamers

Stars droop down in string, stirring up the wine between my lips  
Fog is crystallizing, as cold as the prayerful eyes  
So many so many eyes stream fast on my hair  
I must return, to do something with these plants growing on limbs

I have returned: I have always been a stretch of blue hills

## Pagoda for Urns

The Dead sit quietly in a small chamber in the matless pagoda  
When spring wind rings the wind-bell

The Dead wordlessly lean on the arched window to watch the scenery of  
the country temple

I and my comrade are there, crowding among the Dead  
Watching, and thinking about the last campaign

Beneath the window, the familiar monk who sweeps fallen leaves goes by  
Also, the three wood-cutters go by  
Look, my grown-up son is among today's visitors  
He has put on my old army uniform dyed in a different color, he's pointing  
Squabbling with his science-major girlfriend about how long a pinch of  
phosphorus can burn at night

*Translated by the author with William Golightly*

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MARIN SORESCU / ROMANIA

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## Frames

The walls of my house are covered  
with frames  
in which my friends  
see nothing.  
They think I put them there  
just to annoy them.

There was an empty place  
there, above the bed  
and I used to wake with a strange feeling  
that somebody was watching me.

In fact, there is a sphere of light  
bobbing about in that place.

There is no light anywhere else  
no open eye  
no phosphor mine.